

VILLAGE POLITICS.

ADDRESSED

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TO ALL THE MECHANICS, JOURNEYMEN,

AND

DAY LABOURERS,

IN GREAT BRITAIN.

By W I L L C H I P,

A COUNTRY CARPENTER.

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TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

AND

DAY LABORERS

IN GREAT BRITAIN



A COUNTRYMAN'S ADDRESS

SECTION OF BRITAIN

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THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE UNITED STATES

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VILLAGE POLITICS.

*A DIALOGUE between JACK ANVIL the
Blacksmith, and TOM HOD the Mason.*

Jack. **W**HAT's the matter, Tom? Why
dost look so dismal?

Tom. Dismal indeed! Well enough I may.

Jack. What's the old mare dead? or work
scarce?

Tom. No, no, work's plenty enough, if a
man had but the heart to go to it.

Jack. What book art reading? Why dost
look so like a hang dog?

Tom. (*looking on his book.*) Cause enough.
Why I find here that I'm very unhappy, and
very miserable; which I should never have

known if I had not had the good luck to meet with this book. O 'tis a precious book !

Jack. A good sign tho' ; that you can't find out you're unhappy without looking into a book for it. What is the matter ?

Tom. Matter ? Why I want liberty.

Jack. Liberty ! What has any one fetched a warrant for thee ? Come man, cheer up, I'll be bound for thee.—Thou art an honest fellow in the main, tho' thou dost tittle and prate a little too much at the Rose and Crown.

Tom. No, no, I want a new constitution.

Jack. Indeed ! Why I thought thou hadst been a desperate healthy fellow. Send for the doctor then.

Tom. I'm not sick ; I want Liberty and Equality, and the Rights of Man.

Jack. O now I understand thee. What thou art a leveller and a republican I warrant.

Tom. I'm a friend to the people. I want a reform.

Jack. Then the shortest way is to mend thyself.

Tom. But I want a *general reform*.

Jack. Then let every one mend one.

Tom. Pooh ! I want freedom and happiness, the same as they have got in France.

Jack.

Jack. What, Tom, we imitate them? We follow the French! Why they only begun all this mischief at first, in order to be just what *we* are already. Why I'd sooner go to the Negers to get learning, or to the Turks to get religion, than to the French for freedom and happiness.

Tom. What do you mean by that? ar'n't the French free?

Jack. Free, Tom! aye, free with a witness. They are all so free, that there's nobody safe. They make free to rob whom they will, and kill whom they will. If they don't like a man's looks, they make free to hang him without judge or jury, and the next lamp-post does for the gallows; so then they call themselves free, because you see they have no king to take them up and hang them for it.

Tom. Ah, but Jack, didn't their KING formerly hang people for nothing too? and besides, wer'n't they all papists before the Revolution?

Jack. Why, true enough, they had but a poor sort of religion, but bad is better than none, Tom. And so was the government bad enough too, for they could clap an innocent

man into prison, and keep him there too as long as they would, and never say with your leave or by your leave, Gentlemen of the Jury. But what's all that to us?

Tom. To us! Why don't our governors put many of our poor folks in prison against their will? What are all the jails for? Down with the jails, I say; all men should be free.

Jack. Harkee, Tom, a few rogues in prison keep the rest in order, and then honest men go about their business, afraid of nobody; that's the way to be free. And let me tell thee, Tom, thou and I are tried by our peers as much as a lord is. Why the king can't send me to prison if I do no harm, and if I do, there's reason good why I should go there. I may go to law with Sir John, at the great castle yonder, and he no more dares lift his little finger against me than if I were his equal. A lord is hanged for hanging matter, as thou or I shou'd be; and if it will be any comfort to thee, I myself remember a Peer of the Realm being hanged for killing his man, just the same as the man wou'd have been for killing him*.

* Lord Ferrers was hanged in 1760, for killing his steward.

Tom.

(7)
Tom. Well, that is some comfort.—But have you read the Rights of Man?

Jack. No, not I. I had rather by half read the *Whole Duty of Man*. I have but little time for reading, and such as I should therefore only read a bit of the best.

Tom. Don't tell me of those old fashioned notions. Why should not we have the same fine things they have got in France? I'm for a *Constitution*, and *Organization*, and *Equalization*.

Jack. Do be quiet. Now, Tom, only suppose this nonsensical equality was to take place; why it wou'd not last while one cou'd say Jack Robinson; or suppose it cou'd—suppose, in the general division, our new rulers were to give us half an acre of ground a-piece; we cou'd to be sure raise potatoes on it for the use of our families; but as every other man would be equally busy in raising potatoes for *his* family, why then you see if thou wast to break thy spade, I should not be able to mend it. Neighbour Snip wou'd have no time to make us a suit of cloaths, nor the clothier to weave the cloth, for all the world would be gone a digging. And as to boots

and shoes, the want of some one to make them for us, wou'd be a greater grievance than the tax on leather. If we shou'd be sick, there wou'd be no doctor's stuff for us; for doctor wou'd be digging too. We cou'd not get a chimney swept, or a load of coal from pit, for love or money.

Tom. But still I shou'd have no one over my head.

Jack. That's a mistake: I'm stronger than thou; and Standish, the exciseman, is a better scholar; so we should not remain equal a minute. I shou'd out-fight thee, and he'd out-wit thee. And if such a sturdy fellow as I am, was to come and break down thy hedge for a little firing, or to take away the crop from thy ground, I'm not so sure that these new-fangled laws wou'd see thee righted. I tell thee, Tom, we have a fine constitution already, and our fore-fathers thought so.

Tom. They were a pack of fools, and had never read the Rights of Man.

Jack. I'll tell thee a story. When Sir John married, my Lady, who is a little fantastical, and likes to do every thing like the French, begged him to pull down yonder fine old castle, and build it up in her frippery way.

No,

No, says Sir John; what shall I pull down this noble building, raised by the wisdom of my brave ancestors; which outstood the civil wars, and only underwent a little needful repair at the Revolution; and which all my neighbours come to take a pattern by—shall I pull it all down, I say, only because there may be a dark closet or an inconvenient room or two in it? My lady mumpt and grumbled; but the castle was let stand, and a glorious building it is, though there may be a trifling fault or two, and tho' a few decays may want stopping; so now and then they mend a little thing, and they'll go on mending, I dare say, as they have leisure, to the end of the chapter, if they are let alone. But no pull-me-down works. What is it you are crying out for, Tom?

Tom. Why for a perfect government.

Jack. You might as well cry for the moon. There's nothing perfect in this world, take my word for it.

Tom. I don't see why we are to work like slaves, while others roll about in their coaches, feed on the fat of the land, and do nothing.

Jack. My little maid brought home a story-book from the Charity-School t'other day, in

which was a bit of a fable about the Belly and the Limbs. The hands said, I won't work any longer to feed this lazy belly, who sits in state like a lord, and does nothing. Said the feet, I won't walk and tire myself to carry him about; let him shift for himself; so said all the members; just as your levellers and republicans do now. And what was the consequence? Why the belly was pinched to be sure; but the hands and the feet, and the rest of the members suffered so much for want of their old nourishment, that they fell sick, pined away, and wou'd have died, if they had not come to their senses just in time to save their lives, as I hope all you will do.

Tom. But the times—but the taxes, Jack.

Jack. Things are dear, to be sure: but riot and murder is not the way to make them cheap. And taxes are high; but I'm told there's a deal of old scores paying off, and by them who did not contract the debt neither, Tom. Besides things are mending, I hope, and what little is done, is for us poor people; our candles are somewhat cheaper, and I dare say, if the honest gentleman is not disturbed by you levellers, things will mend every day. But bear one thing in mind: the more

we riot, the more we shall have to pay. Mind another thing too, that in France the poor paid all the taxes, as I have heard 'em say, and the quality paid nothing.

Tom. Well, I know what's what, as well as another; and I'm as fit to govern—

Jack. No, Tom, no. You are indeed as good as another man, seeing you have hands to work, and a soul to be saved. But are all men fit for all kinds of things? Solomon says, "How can he be wise whose talk is of oxen?" Every one in his way. I am a better judge of a horse-shoe than Sir John; but he has a deal better notion of state affairs than I; and I can no more do without him than he can do without me. And few are so poor but they may get a vote for a parliament-man, and so you see the poor have as much share in the government as they well know how to manage.

Tom. But I say all men are equal. Why should one be above another?

Jack. If that's thy talk, Tom, thou dost quarrel with Providence and not with government. For the woman is below her husband, and the children are below their mother, and the servant is below his master.

Tom. But the subject is not below the king; all kings are "crowned ruffians:" and all governments are wicked. For my part, I'm resolved I'll pay no more taxes to any of them.

Jack. Tom, Tom, this is thy nonsense; if thou didst go oftner to church, thou wou'dst know where it is said, "Render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's;" and also, "Fear God, honour the king." Your book tells you that we need obey no government but that of the people, and that we may fashion and alter the government according to our whimsies; but mine tells me, "Let every one be subject to the higher powers, for all power is of God, the powers that be are ordained of God; whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." Thou sayst, thou wilt pay no taxes to any of them. Dost thou know who it was that work'd a miracle, that he might have money to pay tribute with, rather than set you and me an example of disobedience to government?

Tom. I say we shall never be happy, till we do as the French have done.

Jack. The French and we contending for liberty, Tom, is just as if thou and I were to pretend to run a race; thou to set out from

the starting post, when I am in already : why we've got it man ; we've no race to run. We're there already. Our constitution is no more like what the French one was, than a mug of our Taunton beer is like a platter of their soup-maigre.

Tom. I know we shall be undone, if we don't get a new *constitution*—that's all.

Jack. And I know we shall be undone if we *do*. I don't know much about politicks, but I can see by a little, what a great deal means. Now only to shew thee the state of public credit, as I think Tim Standish calls it. There's Farmer Furrow : a few years ago he had an odd 50*l.* by him ; so to keep it out of harm's way, he put it out to use, on government security I think he calls it. Well ; t'other day he married one of his daughters, so he thought he'd give her that 50*l.* for a bit of a portion. Tom, as I'm a living man, when he went to take it out, if his fifty pounds was not grown almost to an hundred ! and wou'd have been a full hundred, they say, by this time, if the gentleman had been let alone.

Tom. Well, still, as the old saying is—
I shou'd like to do as they do in France.

Jack.

Jack. What thou'dst like to be murder'd with as little ceremony as Hackabout, the butcher, knocks down a calf? Then for every little bit of tiff, a man gets rid of his wife. And as to liberty of *conscience*, which they brag so much about, why they have driven away their parsons, (aye and murdered many of 'em) because they wou'd not swear as they would have them. And then they talk of liberty of the press; why, Tom, only t'other day they hang'd a man for printing a book against this pretty government of theirs.

Tom. But you said yourself it was sad times in France, before they pull'd down the old government.

Jack. Well, and suppose the French were as much in the right as I know them to be in the wrong; what does that argue for *us*? Because neighbour Furrow t'other day pulled down a crazy, old barn, is that a reason why I must set fire to my tight cottage?

Tom. I don't see why one man is to ride in his coach and fix, while another mends the highway for him.

Jack. I don't see why the man in the coach is to *drive over* the man on foot, or hurt a hair of his head. And as to

our

our great folks, that you levellers have such a spite against; I don't pretend to say they are a bit better than they should be; but that's no affair of mine; let them look to that; they'll answer for that in another place. To be sure, I wish they'd set us a better example about going to church, and those things; but still *boarding's* not the sin of the age; they don't lock up their *money*—away it goes, and every body's the better for it. They do spend too much, to be sure, in feasting and fandangoes, and if I was a parson I'd go to work with 'em in another kind of a way; but as I am only a poor tradesman, why 'tis but bringing more grist to my mill. It all comes among the people—Their coaches and their furniture, and their buildings, and their planting, employ a power of tradespeople and labourers.—Now in this village; what shou'd we do without the castle? Tho' my Lady is too rantipolish, and flies about all summer to hot water and cold water, and fresh water and salt water, when she ought to stay at home with Sir John; yet when she does come down, she brings such a deal of gentry that I have more horses than I can shoe, and my wife more linen than she

can

can wash. Then all our grown children are servants in the family, and rare wages they have got. Our little boys get something every day by weeding their gardens, and the girls learn to sew and knit at Sir John's expence; who sends them all to school of a Sunday.

Tom. Aye, but there's not Sir Johns in every village.

Jack. The more's the pity. But there's other help. 'Twas but last year you broke your leg, and was nine weeks in the Bristol 'Firmary, where you was taken as much care of as a lord, and your family was maintained all the while by the parish. No poor-rates in France, Tom; and here there's a matter of two million and a half paid for them, if 'twas but a little better managed.

Tom. Two million and a half!

Jack. Aye, indeed. Not translated into ten-pences, as your French millions are, but twenty good shillings to the pound. But, when this levelling comes about, there will be no 'firmaries, no hospitals, no charity-schools, no Sunday-schools, where so many hundred thousand poor souls learn to read the word of God for nothing. For who

is

is to pay for them? *equality* can't afford it; and those that may be willing won't be able.

Tom. But we shall be one as good as another, for all that.

Jack. Aye, and bad will be the best. But we must work as we do now, and with this difference; that no one will be able to pay us. Tom! I have got the use of my limbs, of my liberty, of the laws, and of my Bible. The two first, I take to be my *natural* rights; the two last my *civil* and *religious*; these, I take it, are the *true Rights of Man*, and all the rest is nothing but nonsense and madness and wickedness. My cottage is my castle; I sit down in it at night in peace and thankfulness, and "no man maketh me afraid." Instead of indulging discontent, because another is richer than I in this world, (for envy is at the bottom of your equality works,) I read my bible, go to church, and think of a treasure in heaven.

Tom. Aye; but the French have got it in *this* world.

Jack. 'Tis all a lye, Tom. Sir John's butler says his master gets letters which *say* 'tis all a lye. 'Tis all murder, and naked-

ness,

ness, and hunger; many of the poor soldiers fight without victuals, and march without clothes. These are your *democrats!* Tom.

Tom. What then, dost think all the men on our side wicked?

Jack. No—not so neither—they've made fools of the most of you, as I believe. I judge no man, Tom; I hate no man. Even republicans and levellers, I hope, will always enjoy the protection of our laws; though I hope they will never be our law-makers. There's many true dissenters, and there's hollow churchmen; and a good man is a good man, whether his church has got a steeple to it or not. The new fashioned way of proving one's religion is to *hate* somebody. Now, tho' some folks pretend that a man's hating a Papist, or a Presbyterian, proves him to be a good *Churchman*, it don't prove him to be a good *Christian*, Tom. As much as I hate republican works, I'd scorn to *live* in a country where there was not liberty of conscience; and where every man might not worship God his own way. Now that they had not in France: the Bible was shut up in an unknown heathenish tongue. While here, thou and I can make as free use of our's as
a bishop;

a bishop; can no more be sent to prison unjustly than a judge; and are as much taken care of by the laws as the parliament man who makes them. And this leveling makes people so dismal. These poor French fellows used to be the merriest dogs in the world; but since equality come in, I don't believe a Frenchman has ever laughed.

Tom. What then dost thou take French liberty to be?

Jack. To murder more men in one night, than ever their poor king did in his whole life.

Tom. And what dost thou take a *Democrat* to be?

Jack. One who likes to be governed by a thousand tyrants, and yet can't bear a king.

Tom. What is *Equality*?

Jack. For every man to pull down every one that is above him, till they're all as low as the lowest.

Tom. What is the *new Rights of Man*?

Jack. Battle, murder, and sudden death.

Tom. What is it to be an *enlightened people*?

Jack. To put out the light of the gospel, confound right and wrong, and grope about in pitch darkness.

Tom,

Tom. What is *Philosophy*, that Tim Standish talks so much about?

Jack. To believe that there's neither God, nor devil, nor heaven, nor hell.—To dig up a wicked old fellow's * rotten bones, whose books, Sir John says, have been the ruin of thousands; and to set his figure up in a church and worship him.

Tom. And what mean the other hard words that Tim talks about—*organization* and *function*, and *civism*, and *incivism*, and *equalization*, and *inviolability*, and *imperscriptible*?

Jack. Nonsense, gibberish, downright hocus-pocus. I know 'tis not English; Sir John says 'tis not Latin; and his valet de sham says 'tis not French neither.

Tom. And yet Tim says he shall never be happy till all these fine things are brought over to England.

Jack. What into this Christian country, Tom? Why dost know they have no *sabbath*? Their mob parliament meets of a Sunday to do their wicked work, as naturally as we do to go to church. They have renounced God's

* Voltaire.

word and God's day, and they don't even date in the year of our Lord. Why dost turn pale man? And the rogues are always making such a noise, Tom, in the midst of their parliament-house, that their speaker rings a bell, like our penny-postman, because he can't keep them in order.

Tom. And dost thou think our Rights of Man will lead to all this wickedness?

Jack. As sure as eggs are eggs.

Tom. I begin to think we're better off as we are.

Jack. I'm sure on't. This is only a scheme to make us go back in every thing. 'Tis making ourselves poor when we are getting rich.

Tom. I begin to think I'm not so very unhappy as I had got to fancy.

Jack. Tom, I don't care for drink myself, but thou dost, and I'll argue with thee in thy own way; when there's all equality there will be no *superfluity*; when there's no wages there'll be no drink; and levelling will rob thee of thy ale more than the malt-tax does.

Tom. But Standish says if we had a good govern-

government there'd be no want of any thing.

Jack. He is like many others, who take the king's money and betray him. Tho' I'm no scholar, I know that a good government is a good thing. But don't go to make me believe that *any* government can make a bad man good, or a discontented man happy.—What art musing upon man?

Tom. Let me sum up the evidence, as they say at 'sizes—Hem! To cut every man's throat who does not think as I do, or hang him up at a lamp-post!—Pretend liberty of conscience, and then banish the parsons only for being conscientious!—Cry out liberty of the press, and hang up the first man who writes his mind!—Lose our poor laws!—Lose one's wife perhaps upon every little tiff!—March without clothes, and fight without victuals!—No trade!—No bible!—No sabbath nor day of rest!—No safety, no comfort, no peace in this world—and no world to come!—Jack, I never knew thee tell a lie in my life.

Jack. Nor wou'd I now, not even against the French.

Tom. And thou art very sure we are not ruined.

Jack.

Jack. I'll tell thee how we are ruined! We have a king so loving, that he wou'd not hurt the people if he cou'd; and so kept in; that he cou'd not hurt the people if he wou'd. We have as much liberty as can make us happy, and more trade and riches than allows us to be good. We have the best laws in the world, if they were more strictly enforced; and the best religion in the world, if it was but better followed. While Old England is safe, I'll glory in her and pray for her, and when she is in danger, I'll fight for her and die for her.

Tom. And so will I too, Jack, that's what I will. (*sings.*)

" O the roast beef of Old England !"

Jack. Thou art an honest fellow, Tom.

Tom. This is Rose and Crown night, and Tim Standish is now at his mischief; but we'll go and put an end to that fellow's work.

Jack. Come along.

Tom. No; first I'll stay to burn my book, and then I'll go and make a bonfire and——

Jack. Hold, Tom. There is but one thing worse than a bitter enemy, and that is an imprudent friend. If thou woud'st shew thy
love

love to thy King and country, let's have no drinking, no riot, no bonfires; but put in practice this text, which our parson preached on last Sunday, " Study to be quiet, work " with your own hands, and mind your own business."

Tom. And so I will, Jack—Come on.

T H E E N D .

